

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TANGIER 0423

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ASIG
SUBJECT: POST MEMORANDUM

REF: STATE 211834

FI CHANNEL////

1. IT SEEMS POINTLESS TO WRITE A POST MEMORANDUM WHEN OUR PRESENT SITUATION CRIES FOR A FUNERAL DIRGE. TANGIER IS CLOSING. THAT IS THE WORD I HAVE RECEIVED AND THOUGH I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE, I HAVE BEEN ASSURED THAT THE DECISION HAS BEEN MADE AND IS FINAL. WHAT THEN IS THERE TO DISCUSS IN A POST MEMORANDUM? THE PROBLEMS WE HAVE, AND THEY ARE FEW, WILL SOON BE LAID TO REST. FOR THAT MATTER IF THE DECISION IS ABSOLUTELY FINAL, IS THERE REALLY ANY POINT IN THE INSPECTORS COMING TO TANGIER EXCEPT TO HAVE A LAST LOOK AT ONE OF AMERICA'S MOST HISTORIC FOREIGN SERVICE POSTS.

2. I AM ENOUGH OF AN OPTIMIST, HOWEVER, TO THINK THAT THE DECISION ON TANGIER HAS PERHAPS NOT YET BEEN CAST IN CONCRETE AND I HOPE THE INSPECTORS WILL FORGIVE ME FOR USING THIS MESSAGE TO MAKE A PITCH FOR OUR SURVIVAL.

3. TANGIER IS PRIMARILY A CONSULAR SERVICES POST. THIS
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CITY IS THE PRINCIPLE ROUTE THROUGH WHICH AMERICAN VISITORS ENTER MOROCCO. OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS 65 PERCENT OF ALL AMERICANS COMING TO THIS COUNTRY ENTERED BY WAY OF THE AIRPORT AND SEA PORT OF TANGIER (335,000 AMERICANS OUT OF A TOTAL OF 510,000). THE PROBLEMS THESE TOURISTS RUN INTO GIVE THE CONSULATE A FAIRLY HEAVY WORK-LOAD. DEATHS, ARRESTS FOR DRUG OFFENSES, LOST AND STOLEN

PASSPORTS, THEFTS OF FUNDS, DIFFICULTIES WITH LOCAL MERCHANTS, AND EVEN HARASSMENT BY MOROCCAN CUSTOMS OFFICIALS ARE SOME OF THE MANY FACETS OF OUR CONSULAR WORKLOAD. THE CLOSING OF THIS POST WILL DEPRIVE MANY AMERICANS OF HELP WHEN THEY NEED IT MOST. RABAT NO MATTER HOW HARD IT TRIES WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO RENDER THE MOST TIMELY ASSISTANCE TO AMERICANS IN DISTRESS IN TANGIER BECAUSE IT IS SIMPLY NOT ON THE SPOT.

4. THE CLOSING OF THIS POST WILL BE A SEVERE BLOW TO THE VOICE OF AMERICA BECAUSE THE CONSULATE HAS LONG GIVEN VOA THE OFFICIAL COVER ITS AMERICAN EMPLOYEES NEED. HOW VOA'S AMERICAN STAFF WILL AVOID THE MOROCCAN TAX COLLECTOR ONCE THIS CONSULATE CLOSING IS ANYONE'S GUESS. UNDER OUR AGREEMENT WITH MOROCCO VOA EMPLOYEES ARE LIABLE FOR ALL MOROCCAN TAXES INCLUDING INCOME TAXES. IF OUR AMERICAN VOA EMPLOYEES WERE FORCED TO PAY THESE TAXES EACH WOULD HAVE TO PAY \$17,000 OR MORE A YEAR. UNFORTUNATELY, A VOA EMPLOYEE WILL NOT KNOW WHETHER HE WILL BE ABLE TO GET OUT OF MOROCCO WITHOUT PAYING MOROCCAN TAXES UNTIL THE MOMENT OF HIS TRANSFER. IT IS THEN THAT HE MUST HAVE THE CRUCIAL TAX CLEARANCE TO GET HIMSELF, HIS FAMILY AND HIS POSSESSIONS OUT OF THE COUNTRY AND BY THEN HIS TOTAL TAX LIABILITY COULD AMOUNT TO \$50,000 OR MORE. THE CONSULATE UNTIL NOW HAS ALWAYS ARRANGED THESE CLEARANCES UNDER OUR OFFICIAL COVER. ONCE THE CONSULATE IS CLOSED THE COVER WILL DISAPPEAR AND VOA'S AMERICAN EMPLOYEES WILL NO LONGER

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BE ABLE TO PASS THEMSELVES OFF AS OFFICIAL CONSULATE EMPLOYEES. A FORMER DIRECTOR OF VOA HERE SERIOUSLY DOUBTED IF VOA WOULD BE ABLE TO STAFF ITS TANGIER OPERATIONS UNDER SUCH UNCERTAIN CONDITIONS. THE ROAD AHEAD FOR VOA EMPLOYEES WILL INDEED BE DIFFICULT WITHOUT THE CONSULATE.

5. THE OLD AMERICAN LEGATION IN TANGIER IS THE OLDEST U.S.-OWNED PROPERTY OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES. A PICTURESQUE MAZE OF ROOMS AND COURTYARDS, THIS HISTORIC BUILDING WAS GIVEN TO US IN 1821 BY THE SULTAN OF MOROCCO AND IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN THE FIRST PROPERTY THE UNITED STATES ACQUIRED IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY. WHEN I ARRIVED AT THIS POST IT WAS A CRUMBLING RUIN. TODAY MOST OF THE BUILDING UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF THIS CONSULATE HAS BEEN RESTORED TO ITS FORMER GLORY. MOREOVER, THE BUILDING HAS BECOME A CENTER FOR RESEARCH, SEMINARS, CONFERENCES AND OTHER ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE BETTER MOROCCAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS. THIS PROJECT IS SUPPORTED BY THE TANGIER AMERICAN LEGATION MUSEUM SOCIETY (TALMS) IN WASHINGTON AND ITS ACTIVITIES ARE MORE OR LESS DIRECTED BY THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF MOROCCAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS (ASMAR) BASED IN RABAT. IT IS THE CONSULATE GENERAL IN TANGIER, HOWEVER, THAT HAS KEPT THE PROJECT ALIVE. WE

HAVE NUTURED THE BUILDING AND ITS ACTIVITIES, WE HAVE SUPPORTED THEM WITH OUR STAFF AND WE WEIGH IN TO SOLVE OR TRY TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS THAT CROP UP INCESSENTLY. I MAY AS WELL BE PERFECTLY FRANK IN SAYING THAT THE LEGATION PROJECT, IN MY VIEW, WILL NOT LONG SURVIVE THE CLOSING OF THIS CONSULATE. IT MIGHT LAST FOR A WHILE BUT I AM AFRAID IT WILL FOUNDER, BECAUSE IT IS NOT YET STRONG ENOUGH TO STAND ALONE AND BECAUSE TALMS AND ASMAR ARE TOO FAR REMOVED FROM TANGIER TO GIVE IT THE SUPPORT IT NOW NEEDS. FEW EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF OUR CULTURAL RELATIONS WITH MOROCCO HAVE SURPASSED THE ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL IMPORTANCE OF THE TANGIER LEGATION PROJECT. THE CLOSING OF THE CONSULATE COULD NOT COME AT A MORE INOPPORTUNE TIME.

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6. THE AMERICAN SCHOOL OF TANGIER HAS BEEN SUPPORTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE AND THIS CONSULATE GENERAL SINCE ITS FOUNDING 27 YEARS AGO. WHILE OBVIOUSLY THIS POST CANNOT BE JUSTIFIED SIMPLY TO SUPPORT THE SCHOOL, THE PRESENCE OF THE SCHOOL IN TANGIER MUST CERTAINLY BE CONSIDERED. THE SCHOOL PROVIDES AN IMPORTANT SERVICE TO AMERICAN FAMILIES ASSIGNED TO POSTS IN NORTH AND WEEST AFRICA THAT DO NOT HAVE SECONDARY SCHOOL FACILITIES. IT IS THE ONLY AMERICAN BOARDING SCHOOL IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD. THE SCHOOL IS ALSO PLAYING AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT ROLE IN OUR RELATIONS WITH THIS COUNTRY. HALF OF THE SCHOOL'S STUDENT BODY HAS ALWAYS BEEN MOROCCAN AND OUR MOROCCAN GRADUATES ARE NOW GRADUALLY MOVING UP THE GOVERNMENT, BUSINESS, AND PROFESSIONAL LADDERS OF MOROCCO. THEIR AMERICAN ORIENTATION WILL INCREASINGLY SERVE OUR FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS.

7. THESE ARE SOME OF THE THINGS TO BE CONSIDERED IN WEIGH-
ING TANGIER'S FUTURE AND THERE ARE OTHERS THAT I LOOK
FORWARD TO DISCUSSING WITH THE INSPECTORS WHEN THEY VISIT
MOROCCO. IN THE MEANTIME I HOPE THE FINAL DECISION ON
TANGIER WILL BE HELD IN ABEYANCE SO THAT THE INSPECTORS
WILL HAVE A CHANCE TO SEE FOR THEMSELVES AND MAKE THEIR
OWN RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE FUTURE OF THIS CONSULATE.
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